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PRECIOUS BRADY-DAVIS

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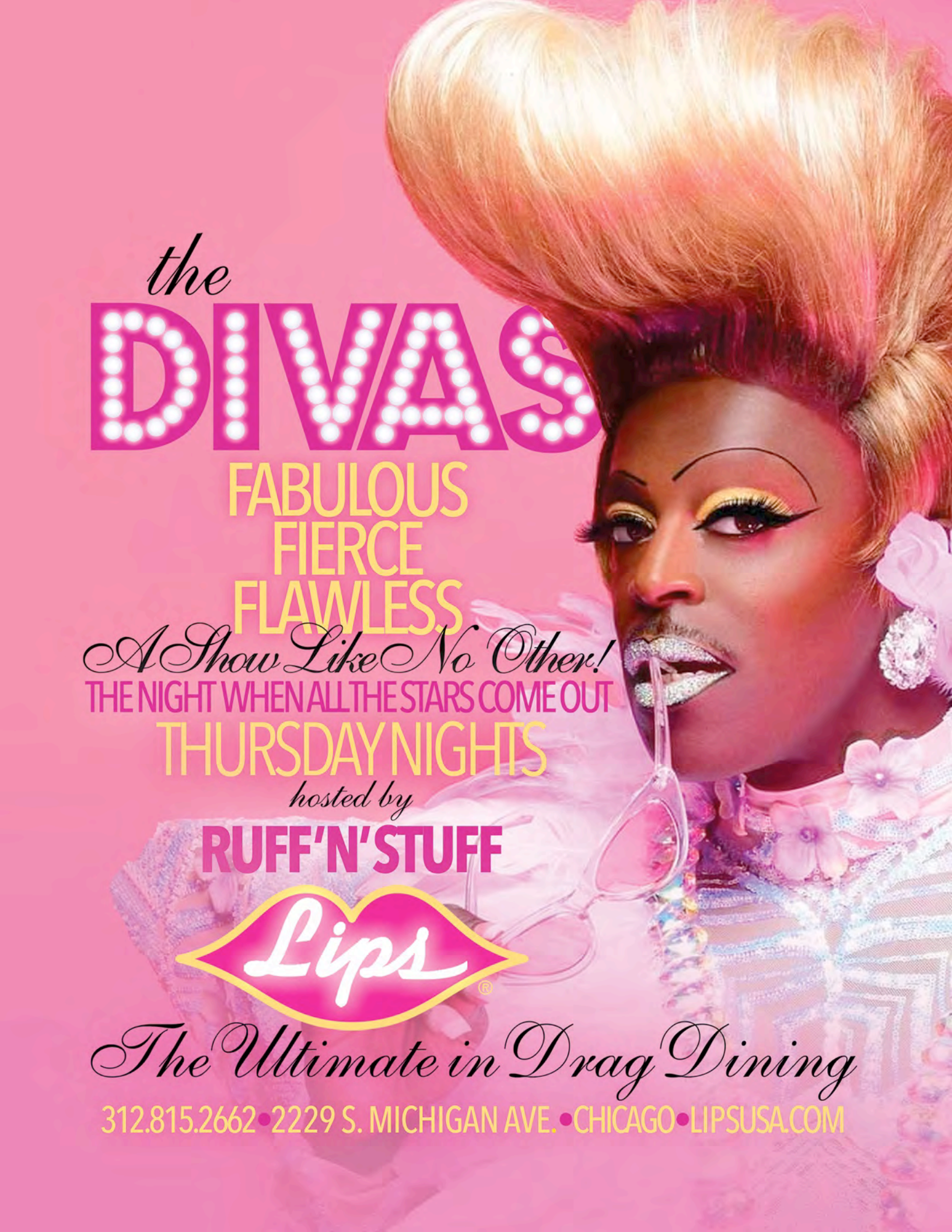
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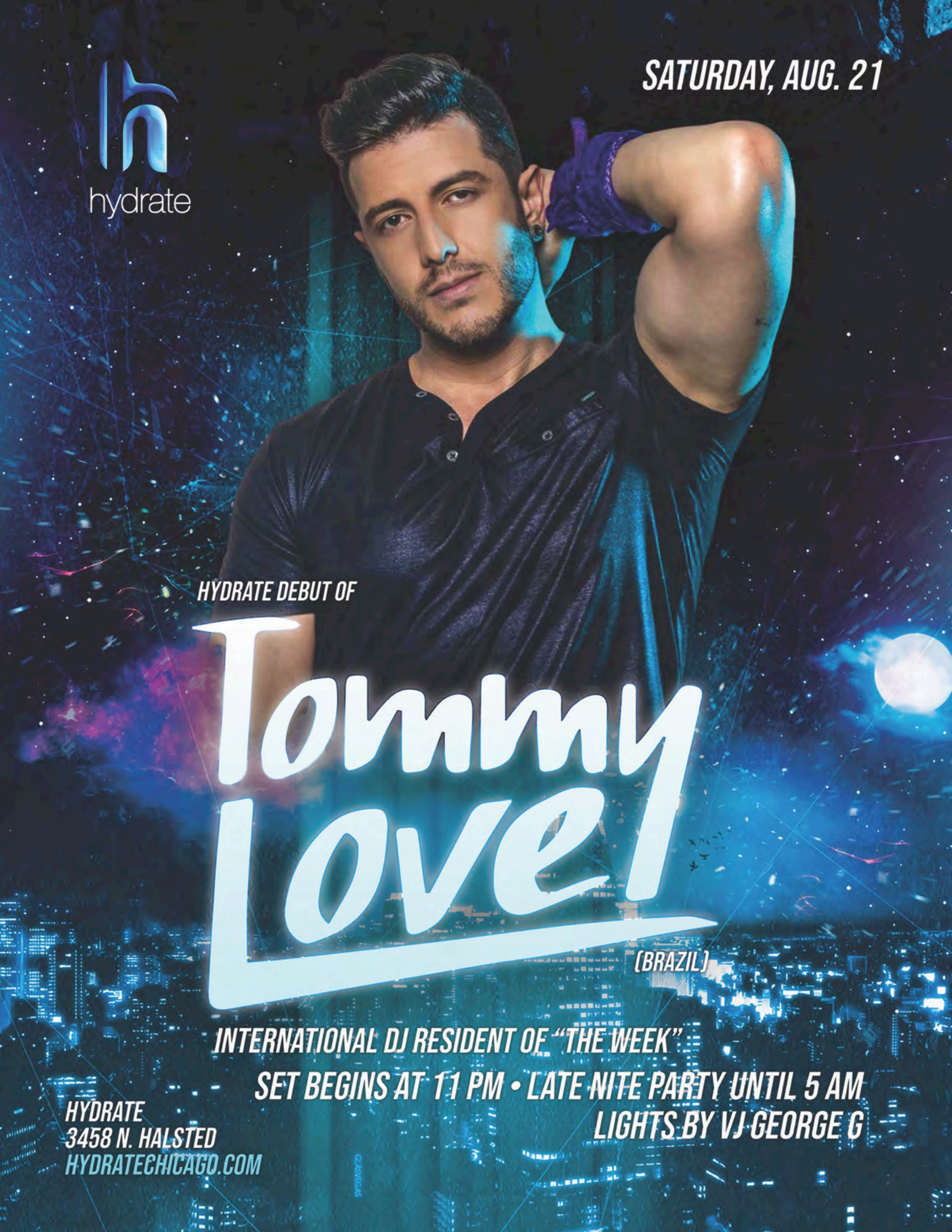
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GRAB PRECIOUS

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Being Precious: An interview with Precious Brady-Davis

By Gregg Shapiro

Memoirs are more popular than ever, especially those written by LGBTQ + people. Lauren Hough's *Leaving Isn't The Hardest Thing* got things rolling earlier this year and Precious Brady-Davis' *I Have Always Been Me* (Little A/Topple Books, 2021) continues the trend. These books also share a common thread as they are about queer people who escaped the devastating clutches of religious fanaticism in their childhoods. Nebraska-native and Chicago-resident Brady-Davis' story involves fractured family dynamics, being bounced around in the foster care system, bullying, and a strict religious upbringing. Having survived all that, Brady-Davis came out as a gay man, discovered drag, came out as trans, and, best of all, fell in love and got married! Precious Brady-Davis was gracious enough to take time from her busy schedule to answer a few questions.

Gregg Shapiro: Precious, why was now the right time to write your memoir I Have Always Been Me?
Precious Brady Davis: I'm fully healed. This process centered my truth and it was about breaking cycles of intergenerational trauma. I feel it's important for the world to see narratives of trans folks thriving.

GS: Were there other memoirists or memoirs that you looked to for inspiration?
PB-D: Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Hiding My Candy by The Lady Chablis and Redefining Realness by Janet Mock were all books that I read previously before writing mine. Each of those women had audacity, courage, and created a world in their books that I related to. When we see ourselves in stories, we see that we are less alone in this world. We say, "I can be, too."

GS: Writing a memoir means that you are opening your life to public scrutiny. Did you have any trepidation about the process, and if so, were there resources you looked to for guidance?
PB-D: I think that, in general, being

Myles and Precious Photo Courtesy of Korto Photography

vulnerable is an admirable trait. While at times writing felt deeply traumatic, I also found it healing. I also made it through the process by attending therapy. My partner, Myles, was a great support throughout the writing and through the editing of the book as well.

GS: For me, the book is a kind of fairy tale, in the truest sense of the phrase. It begins with adversity in the form of your strict religious upbringing and foster care life. Then you overcome the challenges by becoming your true self which means embracing your trans identity. And in the final portion of the book, you meet Myles, your prince. Does that sound accurate to you, and have you ever thought of your story in that way?

PB-D: It's one of the reasons I wrote this book! I don't believe there are enough fairy tale stories about trans women of color. Far too often, when folks reference our stories, they reference our pain instead of our purpose.

GS: Who do you see as the target audience for I Have Always Been Me?
PB-D: This book is full of universal themes: love, acceptance and belonging.

GS: The book is very cinematic. If there was a movie version, who would you like to see portraying you?
PB-D: [Laughs] Robin de Jesus! Because Camp was one of the first queer movies I ever saw. I felt it was the perfect depiction of young me. I found him very relatable! He was also nominated for a Tony for his portrayal of Jacob in La Cage aux Folles, once again very Precious-esque. I would love to see if he'd be a good fit to play older Precious, too. And, of course, he is in the LGBTQ community!

GS: Who would you like to see portraying Myles?
PB-D: Daniel Kaluuya. Myles is grounded, grounded, grounded, and pure heart.

GS: I found your personal history of seeking membership and acceptance in places not traditionally known for either, such as the Pentecostal church and the JROTC, fascinating. When you finally found what you thought would be your home in the drag community, that didn't turn out to be the case. Please say something about your search for camaraderie.
PB-D: I think it taught me a lot about finding home within myself first and the power of queering spaces that are not traditionally accepting of queer folk. I think that the LGBTQ community has a long way to go in creating space for other marginalized folks within our community. We see a bigger commitment to eradicating racism and misogyny, and economic justice.

GS: Early in the book you wrote, "Names speak to identity. Names speak to origin." While the story of how you came up with the stage name Precious Jewel is one for the ages, near the end of the book you write about calling yourself Nashon. How do you currently prefer to be addressed?
PB-D: Who knew when I had the opportunity to name myself, I'd be reborn as Precious. I am she, Mrs. Precious Brady-Davis, she/her/hers!

For more about Precious or to order her book visit ***www.PreciousBradyDavis.com***

GRAB BRANDON

Brandon James Gwinn Smashes Cristal

"Cristal Conners" is the First Single from his BULLIT album

By Jorge Trevino

Brandon James Gwinn is best known for producing Trixie Mattel's two albums, 2017's Two Birds and 2018's One Stone, both of which he performed on. He also opened for Trixie on her USA tour.

Now Brandon is out with his sophomore album, BULLIT, featuring the smash single, "Cristal Conners," a country-rock pop-infused ode to the character portrayed by Gena Gershon in 1995's infamous Showgirls. It is a love letter to aggressive feminine fierceness; something Brandon acquires after a number of vodkas.

The video was shot at NYC's legendary Stonewall Inn and is laugh out loud funny with Brandon made up as Cristal, courtesy of drag queen and make up-artist Chelsea Piers.

We spoke with Brandon James Gwinn from his home in New York City.

Jorge Trevino: Was the video your first-time dressing in drag?
Brandon James Gwinn: I have done drag a small handful of times, but never before as Cristal. The first time was actually in order to perform at The Stonewall Inn as part of a Toys for Tots benefit. My drag name was Whosie Whatzitz.

JT: Did Trixie Mattel offer you any tips on drag?
BJG: Trixie is a true make-up artist, a brilliant musical talent, wildly hard working and infinitely creative. She has given me tips on and inspiration for so many things: from eyebrows and nails to choruses and key changes. When we were together on tour we were always laughing and collaborating.

JT: Has Trixie met Cristal?
BJG: (Laughing) If by "Cristal," you mean the version of Brandon that has been known to stumble, once or twice, onto a tour bus after an overnight drive, a two-hour show, a meet and greet and a few vodkas… she's met her!

JT: How did you come to work with Trixie on her first two albums?
BJG: I happened to catch a Trixie show in Provincetown in a little theatre that

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probably sat fifty people. She lip-synced brilliantly. She was funny; she tap-danced and she played her acoustic guitar and sang *"I Know You All Over Again."* I grew up around musicians and songwriters all my life and I was so floored by the songwriting and her talented, heartbreaking delivery.

With a background in country music and musical theatre, I approached her and said I wanted to produce her first album. I pitched her how I would record and craft the sound of what would become Two Birds. The song I saw her perform in Ptown went onto that record, and when the album hit number 1 on the iTunes chart, we knew we had to make the follow-up. So, a year later One Stone was born. It was number 1 on the Billboard charts and she supported it with a sixty-city North American tour, playing 2800 seat theatres.

JT: Have you considered working with other drag artists?
BJG: I have worked with many! I produced an album of Broadway showtunes and standards with Season 9's Alexis Michelle (now available on Broadway Records). I produced for Stefanie's Child, and I have music directed live shows for Chelsea Piers, Tina Burner and more. Drag is a very beautiful and malleable art form, and I've been really lucky to get to make a bunch of really cool shit with these gals. I'm always up to work with any wonderful artists, queen or otherwise. Collaboration really is key.

JT: Why did you name the album *BULLIT*?
BJG: The title track starts with the lyric "He's like a tumbleweed…." and I'm hanging out the door of an old rusted pick-up on the cover; all sort of contributing to a post-apocalyptic bordering on Western atmosphere on this album. An atmosphere where one might expect to dodge a bullet or two. Also, it's sort of a mantra that I use to fight my never-ending imposter syndrome. Bullit, Boy. Literally "bull(SHIT) it"… fake it 'til you make it.

JT: What are some of your favorite highlights from the album?
BJG: I love the guitar work on the rock songs like "Black Nail Polish" and "Exit Strategy". Tim Basom (guitar player for Dear Evan Hansen on Broadway) is my friend and such an amazing guitarist. He reads my mind in the studio. The duet with Alexa Green ("You'll See") is another of my favorite moments. Alexa is a true talent and one of my closest friends. And, I still can't believe that Broadway's Alysha Umphress took time out of her busy schedule of being in Broadway show after Broadway show, Girls 5eva and Bonding on Netflix to be the speaking voice of "Cristal Conners." We both love the film Showgirls and she didn't even need the script that day in the studio. Still gagging over that one.

JT: Will Cristal be performing on stage in the near future?
BJG: I bet she could be convinced. Though I think Brandon's still pissed about losing that poker game in the video and may not be willing to share the stage with her.

*Visit **brandonjamesgwinn.com.** Brandon James Gwinn is represented by William Morris Endeavor (WMEAgency.com). Follow him on Instagram @ brandonjamesg.*

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GRAB THE REMOTE

Photo Courtesy Showtime

On the New 'L Word,' Everybody's Invited to the Party

Series vets Hailey, Moennig and Beals talk shining a light on a new LGBTQ+ generation with 'Generation Q'

By Chris Azzopardi

What did the first run of "The L Word" get wrong? It's a question that was posed to veteran stars Jennifer Beals, Leisha Hailey and Kate Moennig on Zoom one recent afternoon.

"Haircuts!" Hailey, 50, exclaims. "First season outfits, sunglasses," adds Moennig, 43.

Of course Hailey can't deny it: "There were some *bad* sunglasses," she emphasizes.

But the actresses who helped revolutionize queer characters on TV with "The L Word" when the show first aired on Showtime from 2004 to 2009 are also fully aware that the shades, the cuts and the outfits aren't the only thing that hasn't aged particularly well. The series, for as groundbreaking as it was then, has been criticized for missing the mark on trans representation. It's hard to ignore that fact retroactively in the years following the show, as trans issues are finally at the forefront of our cultural and political landscape.

"We were where we were when we were there," Hailey says, noting this is a common response of hers when asked about the passé parts of the show's initial run, something she seems to be asked about often. "It's so easy to be the Monday morning quarterback at this point. The show is dated stylistically, but thematically I think it still holds up."

Moennig isn't reticent about holding the show accountable for "storylines that are considered problematic now." "There's no denying that," she says. "But at that time, no one was there to hurt anyone's feelings or disparage anyone. That's what we knew then."

As the tide keeps turning for LGBTQ+ progress in this country, so does content that reflects those shifts. Between the original series and the 10 years that passed before the reboot premiered on Showtime in 2019, Hailey, Moennig and Beals saw an opportunity: to feature a young, diverse cast of LGBTQ+ characters who could reflect contemporary queer life, along with delving into modern love dynamics like polyamory.

Though the three actresses aren't writing the episodes, they're still doing their due diligence. "We need to make sure that our show is relevant," says Hailey, who adds that during the decade the show was off the air "the world was changing before our eyes."

She says they felt not only a "responsibility to bring these characters back to show how they're living in

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Jennifer Beals (Photo Courtesy Showtime)

today's world, but also: 'Let's bring on some new characters to represent people in the community.'"

Seeing as though they've "completely changed language," Beals, 57, was thrilled to spotlight a new LGBTQ+ generation. "They've added words to the dictionary — non-binary used to be just a mathematical term," she says. "We look at language in a different way (because) of this generation who refused to be anything other than self-identified. So to be able to bring the show back on and explore those stories is really important and exciting to me."

At the onset of "Generation Q," Beals, who plays Bette, expressed what subject matter she wanted to see represented in the series. One of those issues was race, especially colorism, in the LGBTQ+ community. Aging, which was also on her mind, was a topic she brought to the writers' room. Her suggestion led to an exploration of Bette's menopausal experiences in Season 1 of "Generation Q."

"For me, the show in itself is doing a lot of that work when it comes to personally my character," Hailey says. "I want to go into personal stories and I feel like through that kind of representation, just being a gay woman and showing what we go through, is doing that work. It's not always about getting on the soapbox — it's about the subtleties of what we do."

Moennig's on the same page. She feels the show, by its very queer nature, is innately political, and always on her mind while filming is: "How do I make this as honest as possible?"

"It's the little things that actually seem to provide a lot of impact," she adds.

Moennig recognizes that, from the beginning, the show was always meant to be a "celebration, not a woe-is-me fest."

It still is, she says.

Beals wholeheartedly agrees: "It's primarily centered in joy and the smaller moments, and I think in that way it's been really forward-moving."

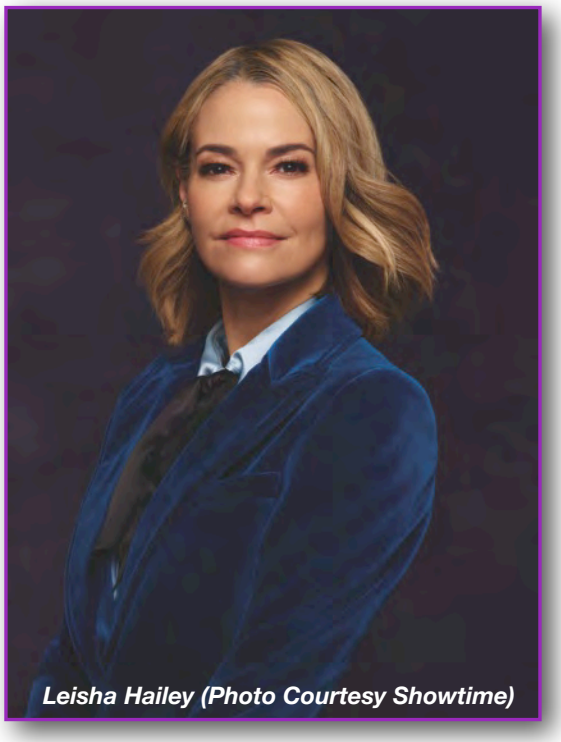
In Season 1, Alice (Hailey) navigates a throuple, Shane (Moennig) opens a queer bar, and Bette (Beals) is co-parenting Angie (Jordan Hull) with ex Tina (Laurel Holloman). Season 2 finds Bette more deeply exploring her mother-daughter relationship with Angie, while Alice writes a book that brings buried personal issues to the surface, things she hasn't quite figured out yet — "a lot of stuff you would think she might've at her age," Hailey says, laughing. And what's going on with Shane? Moennig says to expect "a very, very slow burn where you're going to have to watch a good majority of the season to get any kind of answer."

As for bringing their Alice, Bette and Shane together with the cast of the upcoming "Queer as Folk" reboot — well, it's not an impossible idea. "That would be amazing!" Beals says. "Boy, would that be cool," Hailey adds. "That'd be fun."

And Beals, enthused by these two queer universes colliding, knows just the person to unite these iconic casts: "I know Alice is going to host a party and everybody's going to be there."

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

Kate Moennig (Photo Courtesy Showtime)



Leisha Hailey (Photo Courtesy Showtime)

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GRAB CONOR

The Crazy Side of Queer Connection

'*Sequin In a Blue Room'* star Conor Leach talks playing a slutty queer teen

By Lawrence Ferber

Raging hormones barely explain the behavior of Sequin, a gay 16-year-old high school student who who wears a shirt embossed with glittery discs while hooking up with anonymous guys in the director Samuel Van Grivsen's audacious, erotic and suspenseful feature debut, "Sequin in a Blue Room."

Played by Brisbane-raised bisexual actor Conor Leach in a fearless breakout performance, the secretive Sequin lives with his well-meaning, patient single father (Jeremy Lindsay Taylor) while screwing strangers on a strict one-time-only basis (once out the door, he deletes their respective profiles from his hookup app). Yet when Sequin's invited to a sex party, he connects with a young Black guy (Samuel Barrie) on a level he hasn't felt before and finds himself wanting seconds. This leads Sequin to break his cardinal rule and meet again with B (Ed Wightman), an older man who can lead him to the mysterious hottie again but soon proves manipulative, dangerous and determined to keep Sequin for himself.

At least in conversation, Leach, comparatively loquacious and well-adjusted, is nothing like the enigmatic Sequin. The actor earned a theater degree at Melbourne's Victorian College of the Arts in 2017, scored an agent through a graduate showcase, and will next appear in the Aussie TV miniseries "New Gold Mountain." Here, Leach chats about the film, hookup apps and the status of that sequin shirt.

Lawrence Ferber: The film's been called a "coming-of-age thriller." Do you agree with that description?
Conor Leach: Yeah, I think that's pretty accurate. In the end it's a film about someone trying to find their way out of loneliness. In that way, it's "coming-of-gay." It's funny, because we filmed so much material that didn't make it to the final cut that made it more of a drama. But seeing it for the first time I was shocked by how much of a genre film it is. It's a thriller through and through and amazing to see a queer story told through those conventions.

LF: Can you elaborate on the material that was cut out?
CL: Sam cut out a whole storyline, actually, that aimed to give a little more context around the character. I remember he said he edited the film back to how it originally was in the first draft, which was a thriller, quick and fast, to shock the viewers. Some of the scenes that didn't make it were beautiful and, in a way, it's unfortunate they didn't make it. But the final product, I think, is better for it.

LF: Hello Blu-ray extras! How are you most like Sequin?
CL: I struggle with this question, because I get asked how I relate to the character a lot, but I think part of acting is [thinking] nothing that this human [I'm playing] does is alien to me. If I was in these circumstances, I would do these things. But what I related to most was he just fears loneliness and a lot of us are afraid to admit that. I look back on who I was when I was 16, and I needed connection and love and we all still do, and I also wanted to appear

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strong and resilient. He wants to appear he has everything under control, and I definitely wanted to seem that way.

LF: Conversely, how are you most unlike Sequin? Clearly you're not as economical, shall we say, with your words!
CL: Yeah, I was watching the film thinking, "Sequin just does not speak! Use your words!" I'd say I'm more of a rule abider. I don't like to rock the boat. On the surface I'm much more subservient to authority, and I can't see myself doing anything as reckless as Sequin when I was 16.

LF: I assume that means you weren't trolling the apps during high school, either.
CL: No. I was a goody-goody. I was a teacher's pet! On the surface I was very different.

LF: Why does Sequin cut people off, both the guys he hooks up with and even his own father, whom he keeps in the dark about what he's up to despite the guy's clear desire to love, understand and protect his son?
CL: While we were shooting I developed a detailed backstory that shined a light on how Sequin became like this. I wanted to know what happened and what motivated his actions. I genuinely can't remember too much now, but I think Sequin loves the power it gives him. The sense of being desired after the encounter. You see that in the scene with B, when B says, "I'd love to see you again," and Sequin says, "I don't really see people twice," and B asks, "Is that everyone or just me?" Sequin gets off on that, and it's exactly what he wants. The sense of power and control it gives him — the sense of power that's been robbed of him in other aspects of his life, I guess.

LF: I read that Sam had his own idea of Sequin's backstory and you compared notes after shooting and they "differed wildly."
CL: Sam never actually talked to me in too much detail about his vision for the character's past. My imagining of Sequin's upbringing was quite different in terms of the amount of privilege he had, his relation with his mum, even what his real name is. He gave me that creative license. I remember explaining my ideas to him after the film and he was like, "Oh my goodness, I would have been worried if you expressed all this to me before the shoot!" But that's all work the audience doesn't need to see. That's for the actor. So I was very thankful we didn't need to speak of it during the shoot.

LF: To prepare for the role, did you spend a lot of time on hookup apps or ask friends about their crazier app experiences?
CL: Yeah, I definitely looked into it. Oh goodness me. I heard some absolute doozies.

LF: Would you be amused to learn that someone had a profile with your photo and Sequin's name on Grindr now?
CL: (Laughs.) Power to them. You do you.

LF: You're wearing a nice ochre-toned sweater today, Conor, but I've got to ask: Where's the sequin shirt, and do you ever pull it out on occasion?
CL: I did *not* keep it. Sam kept it and lost it — for a little while, it went missing — but it was so smelly and rancid. I cannot stress enough: It was rank, because it couldn't be washed! It was meticulously sequined and lined; it was so stinky. But Sam keeps it hidden away so people don't convulse, I guess!

LF: Sequin gave off a mermaid vibe, almost, by wearing that shirt. And there's even a bit where B discovers one of its "scales" left behind on the bed. What was the intent?
CL: It's kind of an abstract choice that asks the audience to have their own associations and resonances. I very much developed my own backstory of how he might have come across this shirt or made it, but I don't think I regarded it in quite that abstract associative way. They had it made for the film, though. It was still being finished on day one of the shoot! It took ages!

LF: Has the film caused any controversy in Australia because the character is 16 and already has a prolific sex life? After all, the country has seen waves of moral panic about teenage sexuality over the years, notably some specifically over the work of acclaimed photographer Bill Henson.
CL: I don't think it's caused controversy. I know there are people in Australia who wouldn't like it. But we've been thrilled with the response it's had in Australia. The conversations it's started are amazing. Festival screenings are incredible. When I read the script, I thought, "I haven't read something this bold and ambitious, let alone in Australia." There's still deep, deep conservatism here, so I'm very proud of how the film addressed something that needs to be addressed.

"Sequin in a Blue Room" is available to stream on Amazon Prime.

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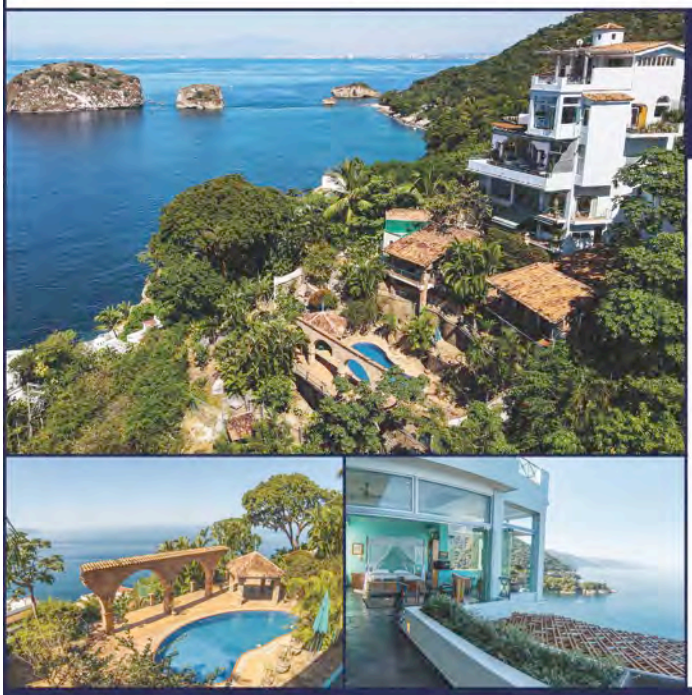

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GRAB A PLANE

Pride Journey: Colorado Springs, Colorado

By Joey Amato

Did you know that Colorado Springs is also known as Olympic City U.S.A.? Neither did I. Not only is the city home to the U.S. Olympic Training Center, but Colorado Springs recently celebrated the grand opening of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, a stunning state-of-the-art building showcasing the history of the Olympic games as well as athletes that competed. The 60,000 square-foot facility focuses on the core values of the Olympic and Paralympic movements: friendship, respect and excellence, determination, equality, inspiration, and courage. The museum was voted "Best New Attraction" by USA Today and it's easy to see why.

Visitors enter a grand lobby and take an elevator to the top level of the building where they can view a chronological history of the Olympic and Paralympic torches, medals, and other items. The museum is divided between the summer and winter games and the self-guided tour includes an emotional video highlighting the greatest U.S. Olympic triumphs as well as some struggles Team U.S.A. has faced along the way.

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum is within walking distance from the new Kinship Landing hotel, so it is well worth the visit. After a morning at the museum, grab a quick bite at the hotel's restaurant, Home Café + Bar. I ordered the North Park sandwich, consisting of roasted pork, caramelized onions, banana peppers and served with a black garlic aioli. It was a messy, but delicious way to begin my stay at Kinship Landing.

The hotel is meant to be a gathering place. Many spaces in the lobby are designed so guests can mingle and socialize with each other. The hotel gears towards a younger, more adventurous traveler who is looking to make friends and create wonderful memories along the way. This is no way means the hotel skimps on luxury. The bed was probably one of the most comfortable I've slept on.

A brief 15-minute ride from the property is the *Cheyenne Mountain Zoo*, which was recently voted one of the best zoos in the country. While the setting is truly breathtaking, the zoo itself was a bit challenging to navigate. There were a few times my guest and I had to back track and ask zoo staff for directions as some of the exhibits weren't clearly marked. Some of my favorite areas of the zoo included the penguin habitat as well as the Australian exhibit. Visitors can also

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For dinner, head over to *Paravicini's Italian Bistro*, an old-school Italian restaurant located in Old Colorado City, or "OCC" as the locals call it. The restaurant was featured on an episode of *Guy Fieri's Diners, Drive-ins & Dives,* and I can now see why Fieri was so in love with this place. The chicken marsala and side of penne Bolognese were prepared to perfection. I wasn't expecting a great Italian meal in Colorado, but I sure got one.

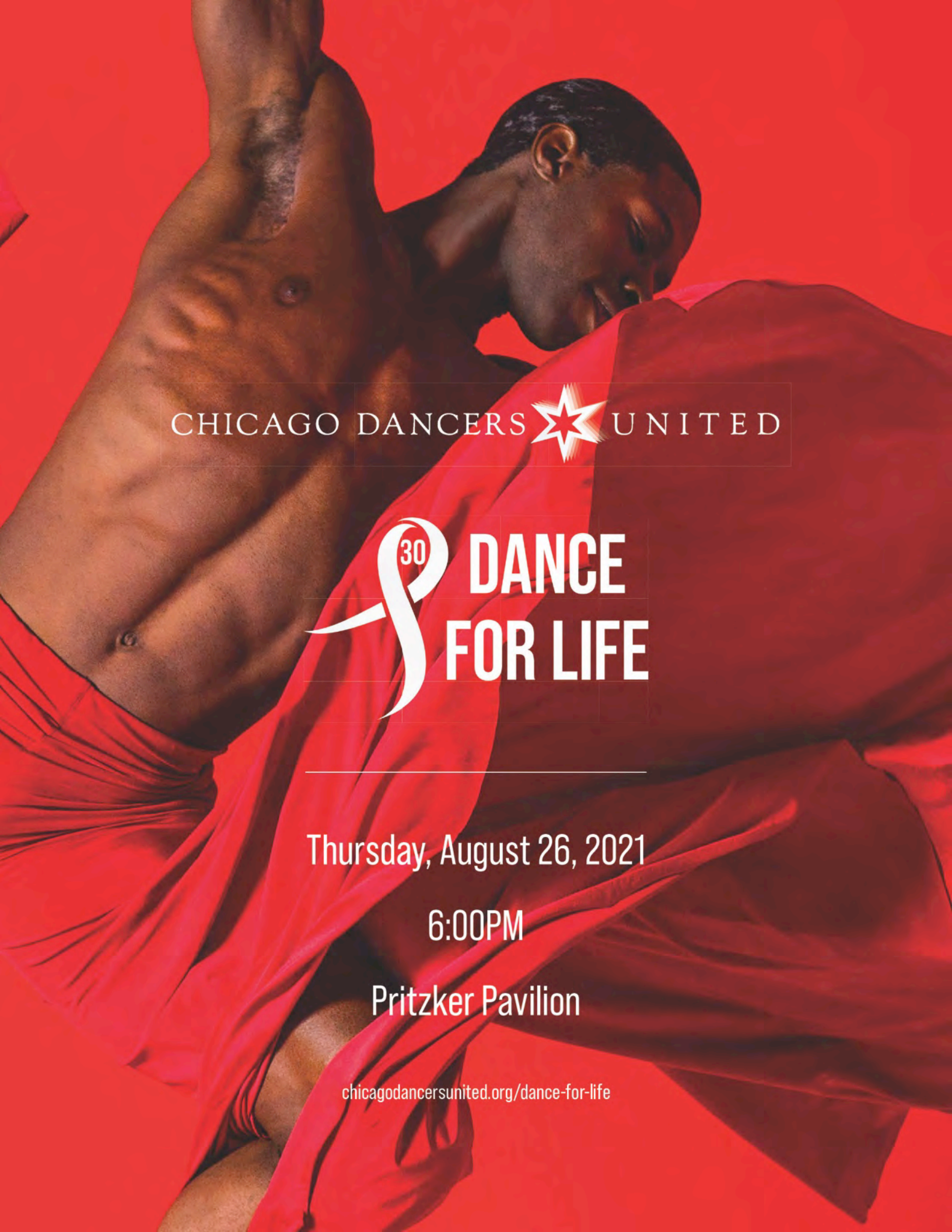
Colorado Springs is home to two LGBTQ bars, *Club Q* and *ICONS*. Although I didn't have a chance to visit Club Q, I did swing by *ICONS*, which is located in the heart of downtown. The piano bar is probably one of the best LGBTQ bars I've been to in recent memory, not only for the theme, but also the friendliness of the staff and quality of the cocktails. The venue opened in 2020 and features a talented group of bartenders, who also perform throughout the evening, singing a variety of music from old standards to more recent hits from icons including Whitney Houston and Lady Gaga.

The next part of my trip focused on wellness and nature. I began the morning with an incredible yoga class from *Dragonfly Paddle Yoga* where we did yoga on a paddleboard in the middle of a lake. Get ready to engage your core muscles for this one, or you will be drenched before class is over. The class meets at the boat ramp of a man-made lake near downtown and paddles to an alcove surrounded by lush trees, with mountains soaring in the background. At first, I was hesitant to try to stand on the paddleboard, but as time went on, I gained confidence in my yoga skills (or lack thereof) and was able to stand and perform yoga poses on the paddleboard. Some were more challenging than others, but I did get a fabulous workout while enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

After grabbing a light snack and latte from *Loyal Coffee* located directly across from *Kinship Landing*, head to the Cog Railway and prepare to ascend to an elevation of over 14,000 feet to the top of Pike's Peak. The entire journey takes a little over an hour but is well worth it. The view from Pike's Peak is spectacular and was said to be the inspiration for the song *"America the Beautiful."* The original railway opened in 1891 and was recently restored, making it the highest in the United States and longest cog railway in the world. Bring your camera for this journey!

End your vacation in Colorado Springs with a visit to the *Garden of the Gods Resort and Club*. Located just 15-minutes from downtown, the resort is positioned on the edge of Garden of the Gods Park and the view is nothing short of extraordinary. Guests can dine on the mesa while watching the sunset over the mountains or wake up early for some sunrise mediation.

As soon as I arrived at the hotel, I went for a walk around the property and was overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the resort and the park itself. My room featured two queen size beds and an enormous bathroom with walk-in shower and separate soaking tub. I really didn't spend much time there as I was too busy enjoying the natural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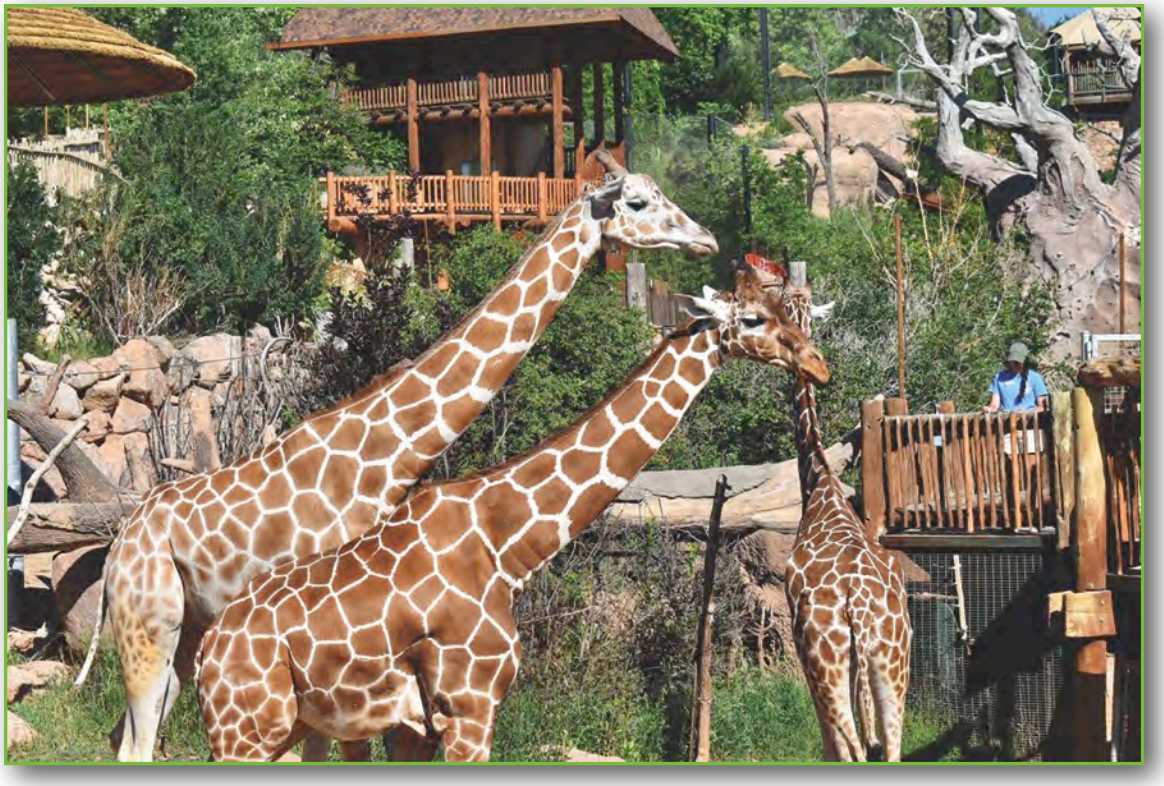

wonders.

After a few days spent touring the city, I was most excited about my treatments at *STRATA Integrated Wellness and Spa.* I began my spa day with Functional Neurology, a complex science which uses signals from the body to reset the brain. The alternative treatment is used to properly align the body's musculoskeletal structure and restore mobility. It's like a combination of chiropractic and touch therapy. Speaking of touch therapy, I had the chance to experience a wonderful treatment in which the therapist used her hands to help treat aches and pains. I wasn't sure what to expect, but the treatment was quite relaxing and something I would do again. I was able to feel the heat and energy from her hands as she ever so slightly touched problem areas.

My favorite treatment of the day however was the Royal Thai Poultice Massage, an 80-minute experience which combines an organic herbal poultice with Thai stretching, and aromatherapy. How's that for a day of pampering?

Begin the following morning with Breathwork and Mindfulness on the mesa led by the STRATA's wellness coach ***Kelly Stoinski***. It's rare that I have a chance to slow down, especially in the morning, but this was a perfect way to end an incredible visit.

Colorado Springs is a great place for LGBTQ travelers seeking a combination of outdoor adventures as well as city life. While the city itself isn't as large as its neighbor to the north, it is very walkable, easy to navigate and everything you need to experience is within a 15–20-minute drive from the airport.

To book your Colorado Springs gaycation, visit Orbitz.com/Pride.

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GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

Daily Specials

Monday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlies:** Darla Dae's Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close**. Houndstooth:** .75 Boneless Wings, $12 Domestic Pitchers,$15 Premium Pitchers, $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm. **Lark:** Happy Hour 5-7pm, Bottles of Wine 50% off with dinner entree purchase. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 4pm, Dancers 8pm. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Well Drinks. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am.
Tuesday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. **Houndstooth:** $2 Tacos, ½ Off Bottles of Wine, $5 Red or White Sangria, $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** 8/10 TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis **Lark:** 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, $3 House Shots, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. **Steamworks:** Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker).
Wednesday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. **Houndstooth:** $4 Appetizers, $7 Burgers, $3 Domestic Drafts, $5 Premium Drafts, $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis **Lark:** Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, $8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $3 Miller Lite Drafts, $4 Stolis (All Flavors), $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am $5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Men's Room Wednesday 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Taylor & Ariana 4th Wed of month – all 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men.
Thursday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. **Houndstooth:** $2.50 Minis • $3 College Beer, $6 40'S, $5 Absolut Bombs, $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** RuPaul's Drag Race Season All Stars Viewing Party Doors Open 6:30pm, Bubble POP Hosted by Khloe Coulee 9pm. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 6 viewing party & Bogo Pizza 7pm, Buy One Pizza, Get One Pizza Half Off (Dine in Only), Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 You Call It's, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Deep Eddy Cocktails **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Chicago's RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars Viewing Party 7pm, Drag & Games Dance Party 8pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am.

GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

Friday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close. **Houndstooth:** $6 Pulled Pork or Pulled Chicken Sandwich, $6 Absolut Mules, $12 Domestic Pitchers, $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** 8/6 Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 6pm. $5 drink specials.. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 Tito's, $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Shakers:** $4 Domestic Bottles $5 Well Mixed Drinks, $10 Giant 23oz Long Islands in 22 flavors. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, T.G.I.F. Show Tunes 3-8pm, Friday Night Dance Party 8pm-2am. **Touche:** 8/27 ONYX Club Night
Saturday	**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-3am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. **Houndstooth:** Brunch 11am-3pm $15 Bottomless Mimosas, $6 Michelada's, $2 Breakfast Sliders, $5 Stadium Cups (ALL DAY), $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets.. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 Signature Margaritas, $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $12 Mimosa Carafes, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** $10 Champagne Bottles, $5 Juice Kits, $3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day Saturday 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **Touche:** 8/28 RIPE Party Deep Beats, Hot GoGo Dudes, DJ Harry T.
Sunday Funday	**@mosphere:** $6 Jack Products, $4 Domestic Draft, House Shots $2. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-2am **Charlie's:** Queeriod! Every other Sunday 5pm – 7pm, Singsational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. **Houndstooth:** Brunch 11am-3pm $15 Bottomless Mimosas, $6 Michelada's, $2 Breakfast Sliders, $6 40'S (ALL DAY), $12 Domestic Pitchers (ALL DAY), $5 Chambongs, $3 Fireball, $22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, $22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm $8.95 Martinis . **Lark:** Free Flowing Brunch 11am-3pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $3 House Shots, $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $12 Mimosa Carafes, $5 Frozens, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** $10 Champagne Bottles, $5 Juice Kits, $3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **Touche:** Beer Bust $2 Bud, Bud Light Drafts & Sodas & Pucker shots.

GRAB A HIT

Top 40 Dance Chart this week

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	Artist	Title
1	Peking Duk	Chemicals ft. Sarah Aarons
2	LODATO	Neon Lights
3	Danny Avila	Unlearn To Love Ft. Madugo
4	Timmy Trumpet & Afrojack	Stay Mine (Radio Edit)
5	Matt Nash	Ready Or Not
6	Becky Hill	Last Time
7	Love Harder x HUGEL x Tobtok	My Bed ft. RBVLN
8	Cheat Codes x Tinashe	Lean On Me (Michael Calfan Remix)
9	Valentino Khan x Nitti Gritti	Your Body
10	Anabel Englund x Yotto	Waiting For You
11	Raye	Call On Me
12	Sam Feldt & Sam Fischer	Pick Me Up
13	Niiko x SWAE & Zack Martino ft. Kyle Reynolds	Glue
14	Allegra	Used To Miss You (R3HAB Remix)
15	Zara Larsson	Right Here (ALOK Remix)
16	ARTY	One Night Away (JLV Radio Remix)
17	Shaun Frank & Takis ft. SHELLS	Don`t Say I Love You
18	Audien	Learn To Love Again
19	Regard x Troye Sivan x Tate McRae	You (Radio Edit)
20	Sigala	You For Me ft. Rita Ora (Radio)
21	Henri PFR x CMC$ ft. Laura White	Faith (Radio Edit)
22	Eli & Fur X Disciples	The Pressure (Radio Mix)
23	Kungs	Never Going Home (Lost Frequencies Remix)
24	Disco Killerz & Holly T	Up to You
25	Shane Codd	Always On My Mind Feat. Charlotte Haining
26	Shift K3Y & Tinashe	Love Line
27	Surf Mesa Featuring Bipolar Sunshine	Lose My Mind
28	Martin Garrix ft. Bono & The Edge	We Are The People
29	Dyro & Conro	Memory Bank
30	Billen Ted	When You're Out ft. Mae Muller
31	Mike Williams & Felix Jaehn	Without You (Radio Mix)
32	MO	Live to Survive
33	Jes	Tight Wires
34	Joe Stone	Right Here
35	Wrabel	Nothing But Love (GOLDHOUSE Remix)
36	David Solomon	Learn To Love Me ft. Ryan Tedder
37	Joel Corry x Raye x David Guetta	Bed
38	Drove & Justin Caruso	Intoxicated
39	Solomun	Tuk Tuk ft. ATNA
40	Dom Dolla	Pump The Brakes (Short Radio Edit)

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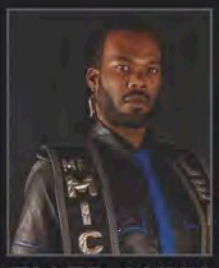

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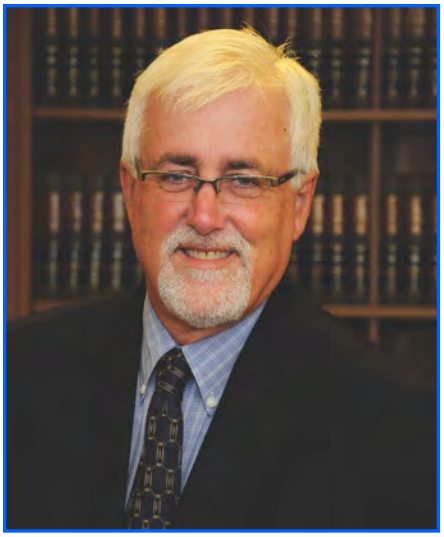
Buying and Selling a Car – Avoid the Pitfalls



Q: I went to an auto dealership last week to buy a new car and was overwhelmed by the high-pressure sale's tactics of the salesperson. A friend who went with me told me that if I had bought the car, I would have the right to cancel the sales contract within three days of the sale and take the car back; is that true?

A: Cars are in high demand and dealer supplies are low. Dealers are not willing to negotiate like they did last year. It is a very different market for both new and used cars.

First, people mistakenly believe that they have the right to cancel the sales contract within three days of signing the contract. They believe that if they have second thoughts about the car all they have to do is drive the car back to the dealer, turn in the keys and then they won't have to make the payments they committed to make for the next 48 to 72 months. They are wrong!

The three-day right to cancel a contract only applies for businesses that go door to door to make their sales. For example, if you had a carpet business come to your house, you could cancel the contract within three days of your signing the contract. But, if you go to the sales location of the business, be it the store or auto lot, you don't have the same right.

Some tips when buying a used car from either a dealer or private party. First, take the used car to a qualified mechanic before you are committed to buy the car. If the dealer or seller balks at that suggestion, buy another car.

If you are trading in your old car and the dealer wants your car key to test drive your trade-in, give the dealer a duplicate car key, do not give the dealer your keyring with your keys. Many times dealers will "misplace" your keys keeping you trapped in negotiations with the salesperson. If you have a duplicate key, you can always leave the dealer's lot.

When buying a used car, understand the term "as-is" on the sticker of the car's window. Federal law requires that each used car display a "Used Car Buyer's Guide" sticker in the window informing all potential buyers whether there is a warranty on the car or whether it is being sold "as-is." If the car is sold "as-is," the buyer is responsible for repairing any problems. And remember the warranty is only as good as the dealer standing behind it.

If you decide to sell your old car on your own (you can usually get a higher price than what the dealer offers you for a trade-in) you will need your original car title. If your car was financed and you still owe money on the car, the title will be with your bank or finance company.

When you and your prospective buyer agree on a price, payment to you must be by either a certified or cashier's check or cash. Don't take a personal check. Once you sign and deliver your car title to your buyer, it's gone forever. Also, you will need to complete two bill of sale forms, one for the seller and one for the buyer, and on both forms put the names and addresses of both the seller and buyer, a full description of the car – make, model, year, price, date and vehicle identification number.

Date the bill of sale the day you deliver the car and include the correct sales price. Many times buyers will want you to understate the sales price so they will have to pay less in sale's tax to the Illinois Department of Revenue, it's not wise to do it. It's the buyer's responsibility to pay the sales tax on the purchase.

Finally, take your plates and sticker from the car. If you let your buyer use your plates and he or she is involved in an accident, it could take a lot of effort to get out of the ensuing mess.

*Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a gradute of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at **RVMLawyer@aol.com**. He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.*

CELLBLOCK
CHICAGO

Photos By Anthony Meade

GRAB HOLLY

Off the Cuteness Scale

By Holly Maholm

I was sitting at my kitchen table in the stable, eating breakfast and reading (online) a fascinating article entitled, "Peter Pan: Is He Magical? Or Non-Binary? Only Tinker Bell Knows for Sure!" But before I could find the answer, Victor rushed in.

Though visibly over-excited and bursting with news to share, he paused… then sensing the presence of some as-yet uneaten portion of my breakfast, he spied one lonely chocolate donut sitting out. Instantly, he ducked his head down to donut-level, and when he lifted his head back up, his lips were smeared with chocolate and his mouth too full to speak. "Glibbah gabb brrft" he mumbled. I did not respond, and after he licked the crumbs off his muzzle, he repeated, "Glitter gave birth!"

I only had time to reply "Wow!" when Victor turned and bolted out the door, he being in a hurry to return from whence he came with me in tow. I pulled myself up on his back, and we trotted in the direction of the Horse Rescue. Presently, we entered that part of the path that led through the deepest part of the forest, and as we did I was puzzled by what I saw.

Periodically, we overtook small groups of animals going in our same direction. We came upon a small herd of deer, who stood respectfully aside to allow us to pass (the respect was meant for Victor, a unicorn, not for me). There were others, as well, including raccoons, groundhogs and possum. Once, a family of skunks briefly blocked our way, but Victor wisely (and diplomatically) detoured around them.

Soon we arrived at the pole barn at the Horse Rescue, where – upon entering the arena in the back – I was flabbergasted by what I saw. First were unicorns; all I knew in the frolic of which I was a member, plus what seemed to be visitors from other, neighboring frolics. In one corner of the arena I saw an assemblage of rabbits, looking shyly about, and in another corner were no fewer than a dozen coyotes and a similar number of foxes, all of whom were plainly doing their best not to give the rabbits any reason to think that they – toothy predators – had come for any reason other than to pay tribute to the newborn unicorn.

After some delay, during which a messenger was sent to ascertain whether the mother and newborn were prepared to receive me, I was escorted to one of the stalls in the back. There I was greeted warmly by the proud father – Fletcher – who admitted me into the stall with Glitter and baby. The newborn was up on her four legs already – as all equine newborns must be, so as to be ready to flee from danger. To say I was unprepared for what I saw would be an understatement.

Her coat was "pinkish" – a field of pink flecked with numberless pinpoints of light reflecting an ever-changing pattern of shimmering shapes and colors – a unique, in-born proficiency which I soon realized prefigures the power the animal will acquire when it grows older: To so alter its appearance as to take on a "disguise." But what left me transfixed were the newborn's eyes. They were green and limpid, expressive of a serene and profound innocence. Taking note of my features with a knowing, sympathetic regard, her gaze seemed to perceive that secret self I keep hidden from the world, while at the same time granting me forgiveness for those faults and errors which I know the world will never excuse.

You ask, "How cute was this newborn unicorn?" I will tell you. But first, I must teach you about the Cuteness Scale, something debated and agreed-to in ancient times at an historic convocation of animals. The scale begins at 1 and goes up to 10. An adorable kitten playing with a ball of yarn is a 4. Two mischievous puppies tugging on either ends of a rawhide bone is a 5. A newborn foal leaping and gamboling in a field of daffodils is a 6. But a newborn unicorn is universally acknowledged to be a 10 (though this is but a "floor," and in practice usually comes in much higher).

I stayed most of the day with those attending to mother and newborn. Later, however, I had to leave to take three of the rescue horses to the stable in town, where they would be needed to make deliveries the next morning. Towards evening, I returned to the Horse Rescue. Arriving inside the barn, I saw Sassy Pants and inquired, "Sassy! I just now came up the driveway, and I saw four of the unicorns disguised as 'Enormous Wolves' waiting outside the barn door. What's that all about? Why the disguises?" Sassy smiled and corrected me, "Those weren't unicorns."

(To be continued)

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Volume 2 of What Would a Unicorn Do? (now available on Amazon) which contains additional episodes of Holly's on-going story of her life among the unicorns, plus additional articles and a short story of a transgender woman confronted by Satan! Send a message to Holly ***www.hollymaholm.com.***

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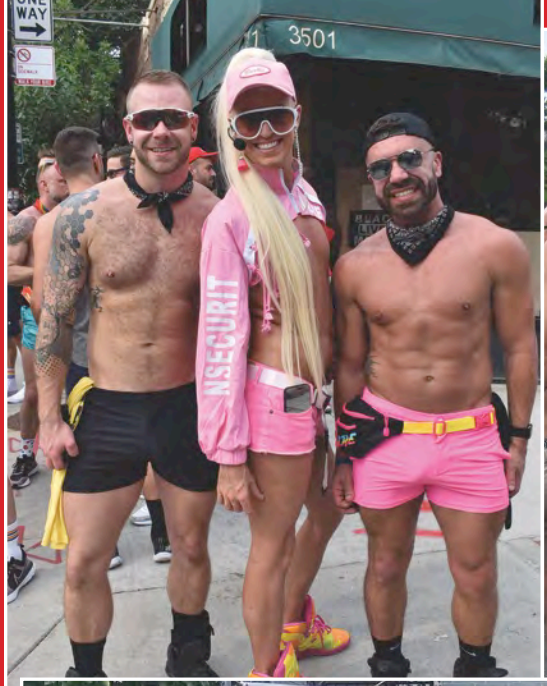

NORTHALSTED MARKET DAYS CHICAGO ★★★★

Photos By Anthony Meade

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MARKET DAYS
CHICAGO

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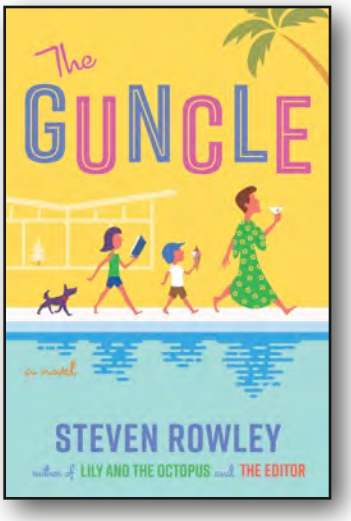
GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"*The Guncle*" by *Steven Rowley*
c.2021, Putnam $27.00 / $36.00 Canada 326 pages



The situation you're facing isn't one you wanted.

You had no wish for it; in fact, it's a hundred percent the opposite. Not your circus, not your monkeys, as they say. So usually, you'd follow your instincts and run but this time, you surprise yourself by stepping up and taking ownership. Now it is your problem but, as in the new novel, "The Guncle" by Steven Rowley, that's more than okay.

Sara had been his friend first.

Patrick wasn't exactly happy when she married his brother, Greg, but she managed to make it work and he loved her for it. He loved her first, actually, and he never let her forget it.

But now she was gone and Greg had asked the impossible: would Patrick – gay man, former TV star, Palm Springs fixture, no-responsibilities Patrick – take Greg and Sara's kids, nine-year-old Maisie and six-year-old Grant, for the summer so Greg could go to rehab while grieving the death of his wife? Could the kids' GUP (Gay Uncle Patrick) step up?

No. There was no way that Patrick was taking temporary custody of two kids – but then his older sister, Clara, copped an attitude, rolled her eyes, and told him he was "off the hook."

PfftRight.

And so Greg headed to rehab after the funeral and the kids went home with Patrick to Palm Springs. It would be a long 90 days.

Grant was cute but full of questions; Patrick learned to make things up. Maisie was nobody's fool and Patrick learned to hide his passwords. He gave them "Guncle" Rules (gay + uncle = guncle), life lessons, and stories about their mother – but past that, what does a gay man who never wanted kids do when he suddenly has two of them?

He takes them to the museum way too often, that's what. He takes them to five-star restaurants and cringes when they order kid food. He lounges with them in the pool, gets them a dog, lets them put up a Christmas tree in July, hugs them, and throws a party.

And he loves them...

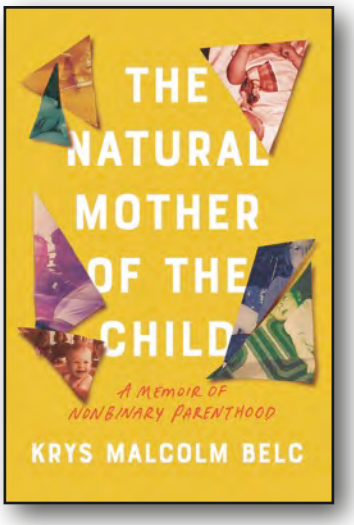
There are four words that best describe "The Guncle": A. Dor. A. Bull.

That's it. This novel is simply as charming as they come and don't be surprised if you can almost hear your favorite actors as any of the characters here. Don't be surprised, either, if you spend your vacation racing to reach the ending you think's coming and you're wrong.

Indeed, author Steven Rowley offers the perfect mix of snorts and sobs here, snarky fun one minute and pathos the next but neither emotion is belabored or forced. That gives readers room to enjoy the tale as it unfolds and grows like an inflating pool toy, and to watch the characters twisting wistfully in irresistible, concentric circles.

Your ticket's in your hand, your suitcase is packed, your destination is close, but you need a book to get you there. If you'd love to immerse yourself inside a sweet novel like "The Guncle," then step right up.

"The Natural Mother of the Parent: A Memoir of Nonbinary Parenthood" by *Krys Malcolm Belc*
c.2021, Counterpoint Press $26.00 / higher in Canada 304 pages



It's really very common.

Giving birth is so common, actually, that someone does it in the U.S. nearly eleven thousand times a day – which means that it's really not much of a big deal, unless it's your baby. In that case, it's a one-of-a-kind miracle and, in the new book "The Natural Mother of the Child" by Krys Malcolm Belc, it's an answer, and a whole lot more questions.

They had wanted their children to be close in age.

That was the plan – Irish Twins, they called them – but when Krys Belc went to the birth clinic, visibly pregnant with Samson and toting five-month-old Sean, the child of his partner, Anna, women in the clinic's waiting room stared. Or were they, like Belc's neighbors, staring because Belc looked like a pregnant man?

Yes, Belc inherited his father's looks. He feared that he might've inherited his father's temper, too; sometimes, Sean was too much and being neither mother nor father, Belc was often unable to comfort the boy.

Belc didn't particularly enjoy being pregnant; in fact, it brought old memories and new notions to surface. Absolutely, he grew up loved and maybe a little protected, but he wanted what his brothers had; he was sure his mother once harbored hopes of sharing a pregnancy with him, but not anymore. And then it happened: seeing the newborn son he made, made Belc realize that he needed to become the person he always knew he was.

A few months after Samson was weaned, Belc began taking testosterone.

How does one say goodbye to breasts that fed a beloved son? Belc didn't want his, but finding the right decision was unsettling. How does a grown son reconcile himself to the idea that his father won't hug him anymore? Sadly, Belc's father was generally awkward around him since his transition. How can nonbinary parents not get frustrated at the loops of paperwork to protect their parenthood? "Natural mother," indeed.

And how can anyone ever fully thank those who helped make them parents?

If ever there was a book that turned itself in circles to get to the right ending, "The Natural Mother of the Child" is it – and that's not unpleasant.

Nothing and everything in this book is black and white; it's calm and turbulent, surefooted and not. Author Krys Malcolm Belc takes readers on a journey to fatherhood that started when he was a girl, envying his brothers without knowing exactly why, giving readers a distant, poignant sense of something wanting. That feeling trails throughout Belc's story, as we wait for what we know is coming and it's worth it: after his account of pregnancy and the self-consciousness of being mother-not-mother, his decision to transition solidifies like a ship through fog.

Look at "The Natural Mother of the Child" first as a parenting book, because that's exactly what it is: the story of learning enough about one's self to be a good parent. As for the trans part of this memoir, that's icing on a cake that's uncommonly good.

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Photos By Anthony Meade

GRAB A FILM

By Delven Shaw

THE WHITE LOTUS Rimming brings *White Lotus* into focus.

I had not heard of the HBO show *The White Lotus* until everyone started writing about the gay rimming scene. Perhaps that was the gimmick needed to pull this excellent show into the general conversation, but it deserves all of the attention.

The White Lotus, created by ***Mike White***, follows the classic formula as old as Agatha Christie: bring a group of eccentric characters together in an exotic location, and see who survives. Literally, as we learn in the opening moments of the series a body is being loaded into a plane for a return to the US before the series flashes back and the fun begins.

The cast is excellent, and the material lets than all shine. ***Steve Jahn*** and ***Connie Britton*** are a 'war of the roses' long married couple with three strange teens in tow. ***Murray Bartlett*** is hilarious as the resort's gay general manager who falls way off the wagon which ultimately rolls over him. ***Jennifer Coolidge*** is getting lots of praise for her performance as a woman of a certain age still lugging around her mother's ashes. That core ensemble Is supported by many others who do indelible work.

The White Lotus tiptoes around some issues with wealth inequality and white privilege, but none of those discussion stand in the way of a well told tale that you will enjoy.

Perhaps the most distinctive element of the production is the thrilling score by ***Cristobal Tapia de Veer*** which combines traditional island music with percussive undertones and harmonies which add texture and tension to terrific storytelling.

THE MESS YOU LEAVE BEHIND unwinds skillfully.

If you liked small time crime dramas like *Mare Of Eastwood*, *The Mess You Leave Behind* is a good fit for you. Based on *Carlos Montero*'s award winning novel, *Mess* tells the intertwined story of two literature teachers separated by fate.

Inma Cuesta is beguiling as Raquel, a woman who returns to teach in the small town in which her husband was raised, the type of community where every knows everything about everybody. Barbara Lennie is the inspiring and sexy teacher she is succeeding. And ***Arón Piper*** who achieved great fame as a gay teen in the Netflix hit *Elite* is again terrific, this time as the tortured youth with a painful secret who torments them both. The parallel stories are cleverly intertwined, and the production values and sets are gorgeous. The large cast is excellent, and the pain of high school students struggling with so many pressures – sexuality, relationships, and the impeding pressures of adulthood – are all terrific.

There are many twists and turns which will keep your stomach knotted as the truth emerges, but in the end, I found *The Mess You Leave Behind* to be a satisfying meal.

1:54 a gay sports movie that is not very gay.

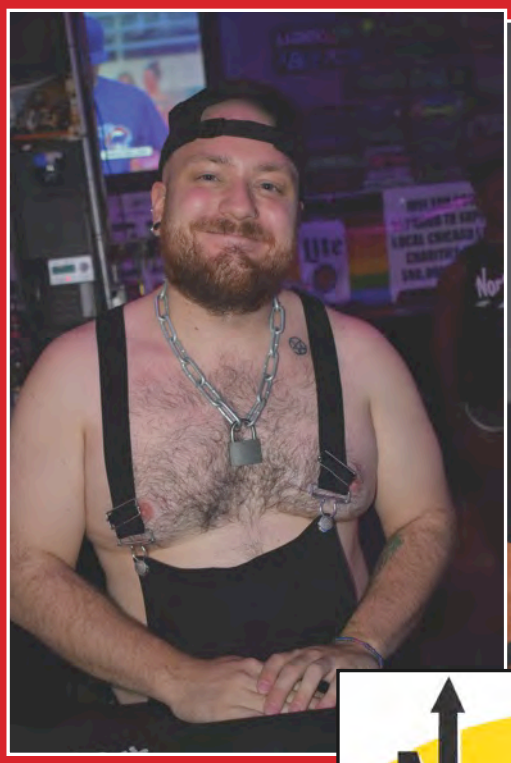
HERE TV is sometimes a great place to find movies that were overlooked upon their initial release, and I think 1:54 (2016) falls into a category of pretty good films that never made a splash. ***Yan England*** is credited as writer and director, and the film explores extreme bullying in a Canadian high school.

Antoine Olivier Pilon plays Tim, a young man adrift since the death of his mother 5 years ago. His best friend Francis (***Robert Naylor***) is tormented by the bullies who perceive him as gay. When Tim stand betrays Francis, tragedy unfolds. If the movie stayed in that lane, it may have had a greater impact. But it does not take a moment to assess how the tragedy impacts those who caused it.

Thus, Tim decides to return to track to beat his principal tormentor, and a typical sports film ensues. Will Tim's friend Jen be a good enough beard to hide behind? While a secret video ever be released as blackmail? It is interesting, and the cast uniformly does a great job. But it could have been more.

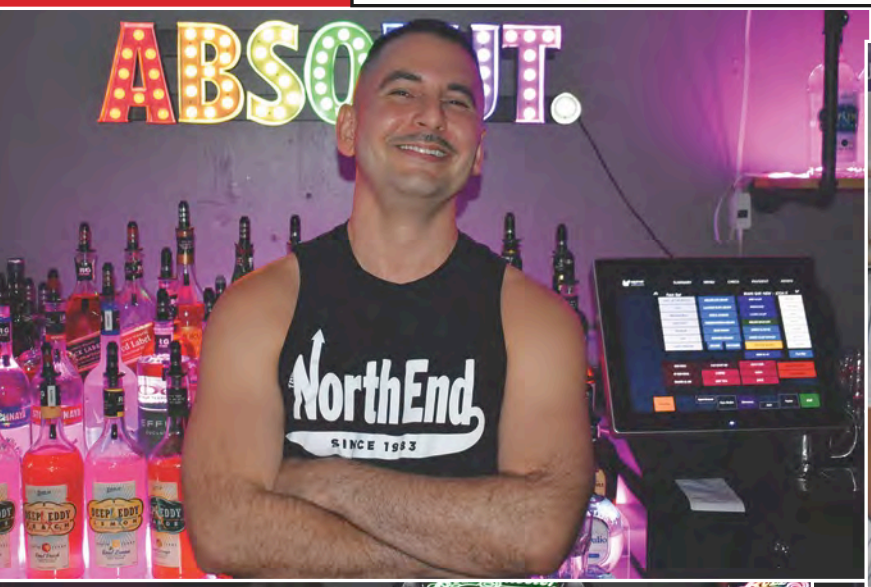
Thus, like many of the films at *Here Media*, you have an interesting film, but one that will not alas make the finals for either a gay film or a sports film.

There are a lot of queer culture available screening right now. Check out the two-minute reviews at DelvenShaw.com for more!



Photos By
Anthony Meade

THE NorthEnd
EST. 1983



PARAMOUNT THEATRE READY TO STRUT ITS STUFF AGAIN WITH FIRST LOCAL PRODUCTION OF *KINKY BOOTS*, AUGUST 18-OCTOBER 17

Nearly 16 months after dimming its famous marquee due to COVID-19, Aurora's Paramount Theatre is ready for its 10th Anniversary Broadway Series season opener, *Kinky Boots*, marking a pivotal moment for the second largest subscription house in the nation as it returns to live performances.

"It's my great pleasure to say: We look forward to being one of the first major theaters in Chicago to welcome audiences back, starting August 18! We appreciate our patrons for staying with us. We couldn't do any of it without you," said ***Tim Rater***, President and CEO of Paramount Theatre.

Kinky Boots – the flashy, sassy, sexy story of big heels invading a small town – shook Broadway and was adored by critics and audiences, winning every major Best Musical Award including the *Tony, the Grammy* and *London's Olivier Award.* The now mega-popular musical features high-kicking music and lyrics by Grammy-winner ***Cyndi Lauper,*** and a book rooted in fun, love and acceptance by Broadway legend ***Harvey Fierstein***.

Now it's Paramount's turn to try Lola's red, thigh-high stilettos on for size with the first regional production of Kinky Boots, fiercely directed by Paramount's Associate Artistic Producer and Casting Director ***Trent Stork***.

Meet Charlie, a reluctant shoemaker, and Lola, a fierce drag queen. Charlie and Lola could not be more different. But when they find common ground in shoes, they see a whole new world of possibilities that will turn their small town upside down, and just might save Charlie's failing shoe factory. Inspired by true events, this huge-hearted hit tells the story of two people with nothing in common – or so they think. From its glorious costumes, to its dizzyingly tall heels and songs that will leave audiences humming for days, no show captures what it means to do what you love and love what you do more than Kinky Boots.

"Kinky Boots is the perfect show to reopen our doors," said Stork. "Kinky Boots has moments that feel like a rock show and tender-hearted moments that make you lean in. It expands from killer dance numbers to a book that is as humorous as it is heartening. It's a show that makes audiences want to connect with their fellow humans. I think we can all use that right now!"

Kinky Boots runs August 18 to October 17, 2021. Paramount Theatre is located at 23 E. Galena Blvd. in Aurora. Single tickets, $36-$74, are on sale now. For tickets and information, visit ***http://www.ParamountAurora.com,*** or call the box office, (630) 896-6666, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

DANCE FOR LIFE 30TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM AUGUST 26 AT MILLENNIUM PARK

Chicago Dancers United (CDU), which supports the health and wellness of Chicago's professional dance community, announces an expanded lineup and program for the 30th anniversary of its annual fundraiser, ***Dance for Life***, which takes place in person on Thursday, August 26 at 6 p.m. (new start time) at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park. For the first time in the event's history, admission is free.

The complete lineup of companies includes ***DanceWorks Chicago, Giordano Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, The Joffrey Ballet, Movement Revolution Dance Crew, PARA.MAR Dance Theatre, South Chicago Dance Theatre, Trinity Irish Dance Company***, and ***Visceral Dance Chicago.***

Randy Duncan will choreograph a world premiere finale. The program also includes a film by ***Winifred Haun & Dancers.***

Dance for Life raises money for The Dancers' Fund, which provides Chicago dance industry professionals with financial support for preventative health care and critical medical needs. The event showcases the city's unique variety of dance traditions and styles by bringing together professional dance companies and dancers from throughout Chicago, who unite to support their peers by generously donating their time, energy, and artistry. Throughout its history, Dance for Life has presented nearly 40 Chicago-based professional dance companies representing a variety of genres, sizes, and histories and numerous choreographers, artists, and designers.

Co-chairs for the Dance for Life 30th Anniversary Celebration are ***Jennifer Edgcomb, Mark Ferguson Gomez***, and ***Tom Ferguson Gomez.*** Optum is the Presenting Sponsor of Dance for Life. Additional beneficiaries of Dance for Life are *AIDS Foundation Chicago* and *American Cancer Society.*

For additional information or to make a contribution, visit ***chicagodancersunited.org/events.***

STACKS OF LAUGHTER: A Night of LGBTQ Standup Comedy The Gerber/Hart Library and Archives Fall Benefit September 18

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives have announced its 40th Anniversary Fall Benefit on Saturday Sept 18 at 7pm: Stacks of Laughter: A Night of LGBTQ Standup Comedy, an in-person event to celebrate and support its mission to preserve LGBTQ history in Chicago and the Midwest, and make it accessible to all.

Stacks of Laughter will feature performances from three Chicago-based LGBTQ standup comics/storytellers: Archy Jamjun, Ron Popp, and Amy Nico Schwartz. Light refreshments, wine, beer and soft drinks will be served. The Library will take all necessary and recommended COVID precautions so guests can feel safe to gather in-person, enjoy each other's company, and have some good laughs after a very long year-and-a-half.

In addition to the regular program at 7pm, there is an optional ticketed VIP reception at 6pm, featuring a tour of the Library (including the restricted stacks) by Executive Director Wil Brant and a talk from acclaimed author/historian and former Board chair John D'Emilio, who will be signing copies of his book Queer Legacies: Stories from Chicago's LGBTQ Archives.

Comments Executive Director ***Wil Brant***, "Despite the challenges of the past year, Gerber/Hart has been able to keep its doors open for researchers and readers alike, and continue to expand its online programs and exhibits.

There's no other resource for LGBTQ Communities in Chicago or the Midwest like Gerber/Hart, and we're grateful to the supporters that have helped sustain our operations during this challenging year, and for the past 40 years."

Tickets are available at ***gerberhart.org/fallbenefit2021.***

To maintain social distancing, tickets are limited, so early purchasing is encouraged.

The Baton Show Lounge

Photos by Anthony Meade

Victory Fund Launches National LGBTQ Redistricting Project; 'We Belong Together' Aims to Increase LGBTQ Representation

Washington, DC – LGBTQ Victory Fund – the only national organization dedicated to electing LGBTQ leaders to public office – launched a first-of-its-kind national effort to ensure LGBTQ communities are considered and respected throughout the U.S. redistricting process. The *"We Belong Together"* project will support local partners, elected officials and redistricting entities in identifying concentrations of LGBTQ people and advocating for district maps that keep LGBTQ neighborhoods and communities together. The project comes as the U.S. Census Bureau releases new precinct-level population data that will kickstart redistricting efforts nationwide.

Redistricting is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to increase LGBTQ representation in government by solidifying LGBTQ voting power within appropriately-drawn districts – including city council, state legislative and congressional districts. "*We Belong Together"* and its partners will work to convince redistricting entities to:

• Define the LGBTQ community as a "community of interest" for redistricting – much like many other vulnerable populations – so the interests and well-being of LGBTQ people are emphasized during the map-making process.

• Identify and advocate for concentrations of LGBTQ people using population data, locations of LGBTQ neighborhoods and businesses, memberships in LGBTQ organizations, and even reports of anti-LGBTQ crime, among other tools.

"The drawing of district lines is enormously consequential to LGBTQ representation, yet historically our community has been largely absent from discussions on redistricting," said ***Mayor Annise Parker***, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Fund. "A line drawn in the middle of a neighborhood with a large LGBTQ population – or even a line drawn to cut off a corner of that neighborhood – can be the difference between electing an LGBTQ person or having zero LGBTQ representation. With better LGBTQ population data and our community and redistricting entities educated about the importance of our inclusion, we can build LGBTQ political power for the next decade and beyond."

"We Belong Together" will focus on states with independent redistricting commissions – including Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan and Montana – but will support any local organizations, elected officials or redistricting entities that aim to make LGBTQ people a "community of interest." The project provides support by educating stakeholders about the importance of LGBTQ inclusion, providing resources and guidance on advocacy and population data collection, and partnering on testimonies to redistricting entities.

When explaining the impact of the effort, *"We Belong Together"* cites redistricting work in San Diego, which led to the creation of an "LGBTQ legacy seat" on the city council. In the early 1990s, LGBTQ advocates pulled together LGBTQ population data using as many sources as possible and successfully advocated for a council district that encompassed all of Hillcrest, a predominantly LGBTQ neighborhood. In 1993, after redistricting, ***Christine Kehoe*** won that city council seat, becoming San Diego's first out LGBTQ official. The seat has been held by an LGBTQ city council member ever since. ***Toni Atkins***, now President Pro Tem of the California state Senate; ***Todd Gloria***, now mayor of San Diego; and ***Chris Ward***, now a California state Assemblymember; all held the seat in succession. The seat is currently held by out city councilmember ***Stephen Whitburn***.

"When we build districts that keep LGBTQ neighborhoods together, we create LGBTQ legacy seats that serve as pipelines for out leaders to achieve even higher-level office," said Mayor Parker. "If LGBTQ community members in a small city come together to focus on this effort, they can elect their first LGBTQ schoolboard member, who in the future may be their first LGBTQ state legislator and then member of Congress."

Visit the *"We Belong Together"* website for more stories and information at **http://www.*LGBTQredistricting.com.***

Jered Pruitt, CASL Chief Operating Officer, Honored as a Crain's Chicago Business 2021 Notable LGBTQ Executive

The Chinese American Service League (CASL), the largest AAPI social service agency in the Midwest, is proud to announce that Chief Operating Officer ***Jered Pruitt*** was honored as a *Crain's Chicago Business* 2021 Notable LGBTQ Executive. Crain's Chicago Business recognized 50 LGBTQ executives and professionals who have made significant contributions to advancing equality within the workplace or in the Chicago area.

"We're very proud of Jered, not just for being honored as a Notable LGBTQ Executive, but for the exceptional work he does at CASL every day," said ***Paul Luu***, Chief Executive Officer of CASL. "Jered is an instrumental leader and is a driving force for CASL's ability to provide a suite of social services that meet the unique needs of Chicago's AAPI community."

As COO, Jered focuses on internal operations and administration, programs, and development functions, ensuring effective management teams are in place to execute and provide leadership, direction, and support to all departments. Jered oversees over 500 staff members and more than 200 volunteers who serve thousands within the Chicagoland Chinese community.

"Jered is a deeply committed mentor to the organization's young professionals and works diligently to ensure everyone's voice is heard," said ***Jim Mark***, CASL Board Chairman. "He oversees CASL's market rate studies and talent acquisitions to help enhance retention and recruit a diverse group of professionals and actively supports the CEO to vet diverse, prospective board members."

Jered was instrumental in leading CASL's COVID-19 response. He established PPE reserves, pivoted departments to remote work, led CASL's vaccination efforts (over 95% of staff are fully vaccinated), and expanded the senior meals program to combat food insecurity throughout the pandemic.

In addition, Jered led the development and execution of CASL's Center for Social Impact, and its annual Social Determinants of Health reports in 2020 and 2021. The reports have proven to be instrumental in identifying inequities within the community. Upon identifying the inequities, Jered adjusts CASL's service offerings to address the identified inequities and improve the well-being of Chicago's AAPI community.

Jered was nominated through a formal submission process to Crain's Chicago Business, and his submission was reviewed by the outlet's editors. Only the most distinguished individuals are selected, and to qualify, each candidate must have made significant contributions to advancing equality within the workplace in the Chicago area.

For more information on CASL visit ***http://www.CASLservice.org***

Photos by Anthony Meade

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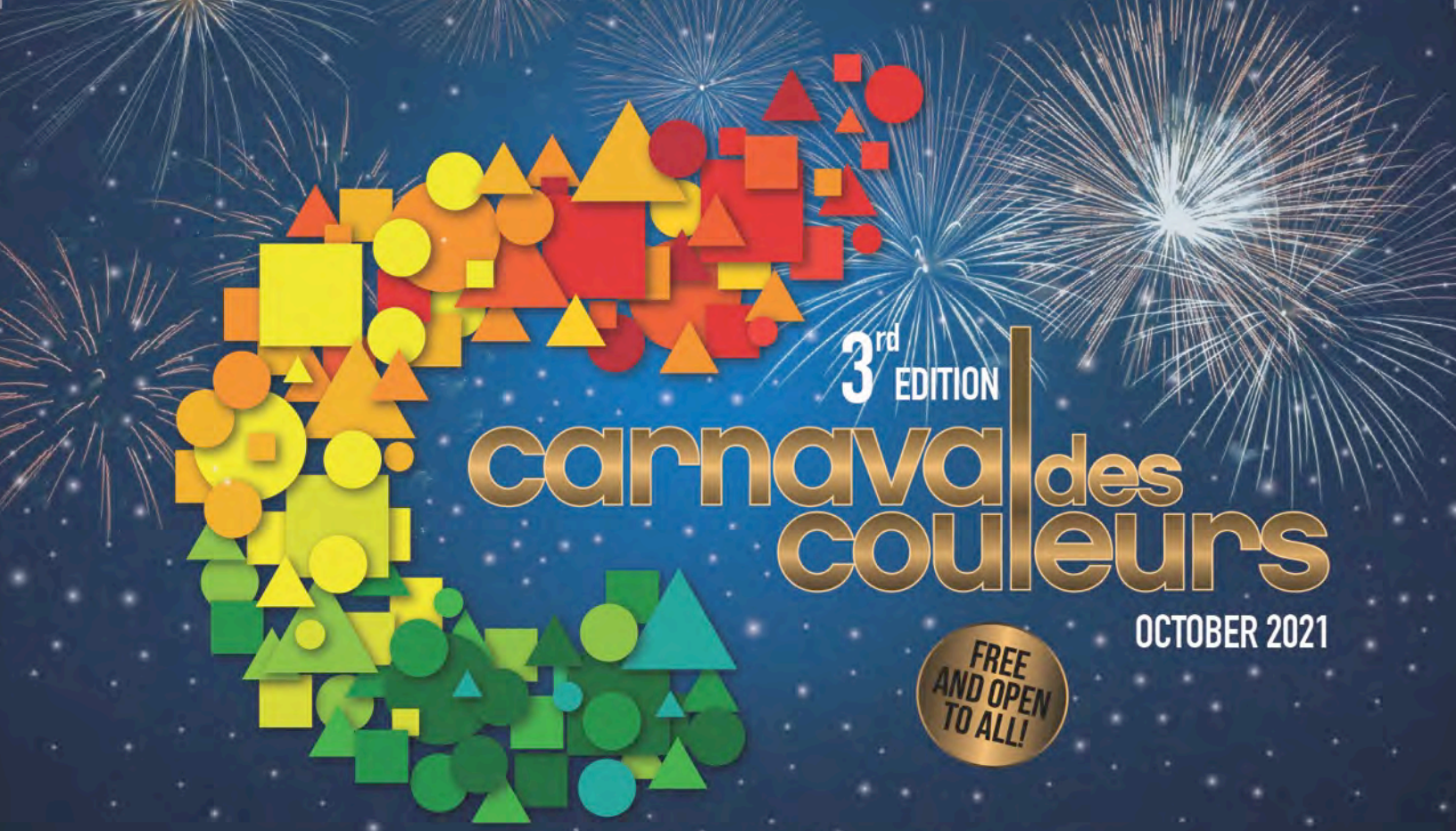

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